

# Writing a Timeline

In Chapter one we looked at Genesis 3:9, where God asks Adam the thought-provoking question, “Where are you?” In ministry it is imperative to verify our location, focus and calling by looking at where we have been. A timeline helps us to do that. Terry B. Walling gives practical advice on creating a timeline<sup>1</sup>

Set aside some extended time for a personal retreat where you can pray, reflect and write without distractions.

## Supplies

- Your Bible.
- Notebook or computer, pen and markers.
- One sheet of poster board.
- A set of four colors of Post-it Notes to record the data.

## The Timeline Process

1. Brainstorm about significant events that have impacted your life. Record them in a random list, then arrange them in sequential order. Be sure to include the events, relationships and circumstances of your journey and write them in a narrative form of no more than five pages.
2. Then transfer these critical incidences of your life on Post-it Notes using the same color notes. Record one critical event, person or circumstance per note on your FIRST color Post-it note.
3. Brainstorm about struggles, negative and painful, that you have experienced. Write them down on your SECOND color of post-it notes. Randomly place them on the poster board. If some of your critical incidences were painful, transpose them to the second color note.
4. Order all of these chronologically in columns from top to bottom, left to right on the poster paper (landscape view) from earliest memory to the most recent. Be sure to leave 2 inches (5 centimeters) at the top and bottom. Integrate the two colors. Each column will have notes of people, events, circumstances and struggles.
5. You will see themes, or chapters, emerge for each column. Divide the notes into three to five columns. Put a title to each chapter using your THIRD Post-it color, that best sums up that period of time. As you process these items, you may change the headings, but it is good to put down something to begin with.
6. Under each chapter, record on your FOURTH color of Post-it notes the answer to the following question: What was God trying to teach me during this season?

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<sup>1</sup> Terry B. Walling, *Self-Discovery Workbook* from the Focused Living Resource Kit, (CRM, Wheaton, IL: Church Resource Ministries. 2001), 9-17.

7. Across the top of your page put corresponding years of the events and your corresponding age.
8. Transfer the data to a one-page document that you can edit and update. I have added my own timeline for your reference.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Describe what you learned about yourself as a person.
2. What is the most valuable part of your character?
3. What is unique about you as a child of God?
4. What did you learn about interpersonal relationships?
5. What are your core values of church ministry?
6. Did you have any takeaways from your difficult experiences?
7. In a sentence, how would you describe your passion for ministry?